

COMBINED TOTE-BAG, SEAT CUSHION, BLANKET

The present invention relates to a multi-purpose device capable of assuming a plurality of configurations such that the device can be used as a tote-bag, a seat cushion, a blanket, and/or a cape.

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INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE

The contents of each U.S. patent or other reference, if any, cited in this application, are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

In today's fast paced and sometimes hectic business and recreational environments
10 individuals continue to look for devices that simplify their lives. Typically, a multi-purpose device satisfies the need for simplicity and efficiency by performing multiple tasks with a single instrument, for example, tasks that would typically take more than one device to perform. By way of example, the well known Swiss Army knife may contain various cutting tools, utensils, and a tooth pick. In addition, high-technology has combined a camera with a wristwatch in a
15 convenient package, and has combined calendars, phone books, and to-do lists in a single hand-held computer, such as personal digital assistants.

Each aforementioned multi-purpose device is capable of performing more than one task. Some multi-purpose devices, such as the Swiss Army knife, function to assist, for example, a camper, hiker, or world traveler, thus eliminating the need for additional equipment that can be
20 bulky, cumbersome to handle, and inefficient. Similarly, individuals attending sporting events, planning a picnic or beach outing, or similar activity which may require a person to carry multiple items, such as food products, blankets, and sitting devices, among other things, would benefit from a device capable of serving multiple functions.

Accordingly, there is a need for a multi-purpose device capable of being converted into a plurality of configurations such that the device can be used in activities which may require a person to carry multiple items, sitting surfaces, and/or blankets, among other things.

SUMMARY

5 A multi-purpose device, which is provided to attempt to reduce the need of people to carry a more than one object is described. The multi-purpose device is capable of assuming a plurality of configurations including a first configuration, a second configuration, and a third configuration. Each configuration of the device may be used for a different purpose or purposes. For example, the device is capable of being configured as a tote-bag, a seat cushion, and a
10 blanket. The device preferably includes a soft body, a first handle and an optional second handle coupled to the soft body, and a first fastener assembly and optionally a second fastener assembly, such as a zipper(s), for retaining the device in the first configuration.

 In the first configuration the soft body is arranged to have first and second sidewalls and a bottom surface (the bottom surface may be formed simply by the connection of the first and
15 second sidewalls at the bottom of the multi-purpose device) which together define an interior compartment. The interior compartment has inner surfaces and an open top. The first fastener assembly is positioned along a length of the first and second sidewalls such that when retaining the device in the first configuration, approximately equal portions of the soft body are on opposite sides of the interior compartment. The first handle is attached to a sidewall of the soft
20 body when the device is in the first configuration. A second configuration is formed by releasing the first fastener assembly and expanding the soft body whereby the interior compartment is eliminated. By expanding the soft body, a sitting surface, such as a seat cushion, is formed. By expanding the soft body in the second configuration, a third configuration is obtained to form a

substantially flat surface, which may be a blanket. In certain embodiments of the device, first and second handles are provided on a surface of the device in the third configuration, and are located in positions to accommodate a person's arms whereby the device can be used as a cape or other covering for the person.

5 The present invention may be used by providing the multi-purpose device, forming the first configuration suitable for use as a tote-bag, forming the second configuration suitable for use as a seat cushion, and forming the third configuration suitable for use as a blanket. A method may also include using the device as a cape, which may be achieved by configuring the soft body in the third configuration.

10 The present invention thus provides a device capable of being converted into a plurality of configurations such that the device can be used as a tote-bag, a seat cushion, a blanket and/or a cape.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a multi-purpose device in accordance
15 with the present invention, showing a first configuration.

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of the first configuration of FIG. 1 being carried by a person.

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of the first configuration of FIG. 1, configured for use a seat cushion.

20 FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the multi-purpose device of FIG. 1, showing a second configuration suitable for use as a seat cushion.

FIG. 3A is a perspective view of the multi-purpose device of FIG. 1 showing a third configuration.

FIG. 3B is a perspective view of the third configuration of the device of FIG. 3A in use as a blanket.

FIGs. 4A-4G illustrate a converting sequence of the device of FIG. 1 from a first configuration to a second configuration to a third configuration.

5 FIG. 5 is a flow chart illustrating a method of using a multi-purpose device in accordance with the present invention.

FIGs. 6A-6E illustrate another converting sequence of the device of FIG. 1 from a first configuration to a second configuration to a third configuration.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

10 An embodiment of the multi-purpose device 5 of the present invention is shown in Figures 1,2, and 3. Generally, the present invention is capable of assuming a plurality of configurations including a first configuration, a second configuration, and a third configuration such that the device can be used as a tote-bag, a seat cushion or cushions, and/or a blanket. As discussed herein, the device 5 can also assume a fourth configuration such that the device can be
15 used as a cape. Accordingly, the device 5 enables a person to carry multiple items, including seat cushions and a blanket, in a single device.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, the multi-purpose device 5 includes a soft body 10, a first handle 15 on the soft body 10, and a first fastener assembly 20 for retaining the device 5 in a first configuration. In the first configuration, the soft body 10 is arranged to have a bottom 30 and
20 sidewalls 35A and 35B which together define outer walls and an interior compartment 55. The interior compartment has inner surfaces and an open top. In other words, the device 5 includes a first sidewall, such as sidewall 35a, and a second sidewall, such as sidewall 35b, which are generally opposed to each other. Each sidewall 35a and 35b has a length 35l and a width 35w.

The bottom surface 30 joins the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b along the width 35w. The device 5 includes a handle 15 coupled to one of the sidewalls. As illustrated in FIG. 1, handle 15 is coupled to sidewall 35b. The fastener assembly 20 is located along the length 35l of the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b. When the fastener assembly 20 is in a "closed" configuration, as illustrated, the fastener assembly 20 joins the first sidewall 35a to the second sidewall 35b thereby forming the interior compartment 55 of the tote-bag. Or, stated differently, first sidewall 35a and second sidewall 35b surround the interior compartment 55 when the fastener assembly 20 is closed.

In reference to the disclosure herein, the term "first configuration" refers to a configuration of the device where the device is used as a tote-bag, which may be used to store and/or carry items, such as, cosmetics, food, electronics, clothes, office supplies, reading materials, personal items, and other portable goods. An example of the first configuration of the device 5 is shown in FIG. 1A.

As used herein, the term "second configuration" refers to a configuration where the device is modified or adjusted from the first configuration to form a surface, such as a sitting surface or a seat cushion. The surface in the second configuration is preferably substantially flat, e.g., it provides a relatively flat surface suitable for sitting. However, persons of ordinary skill in the art will understand that, by its very nature, a substantially flat surface such as a blanket will typically have bumps, ripples, tucks, or various other variances that place the blanket in a somewhat less than perfectly flat arrangement. An example of the second configuration is illustrated in FIG. 2. As illustrated in the figures, the second configuration may be obtained by unfolding the tote-bag.

In addition, the term "third configuration" refers to a configuration of the device 5 where it is used as a blanket or sheet, which may also be a sitting surface. As illustrated in the figures, the third configuration may be obtained by unfolding or otherwise expanding the device from its second configuration. Typically, and in the illustrated embodiment, the third configuration is the configuration in which the device is completely unfolded or extended. An example of the third configuration is illustrated in FIG. 3A and FIG. 3B. However, in other embodiments, the third configuration can include one or more folded portions so that the tote-bag is not completely unfolded.

The "fourth configuration", as used herein, refers to an optional configuration of the device in which it is configured to be used as a cape, which may be worn by a person. The fourth configuration is similar to the third configuration illustrated in FIG. 3A, but the handles 15 and 40 are positioned to accommodate a person's arms so that the device can be wrapped around the person and/or cover at least a portion of the person, such as the person's back.

Referring back to the figures, the device 5 is configured such that when the first sidewall 35a is separated from the second sidewall 35b to form the second configuration, the first and second sidewalls define a first substantially flat sitting surface 60, as shown in FIG. 2. The first substantially flat sitting surface 60 has an area that is greater than the area of the first sidewall 35a or the second sidewall 35b. In the illustrated embodiment, the area of the first substantially flat sitting surface 60 has an area that is approximately double the area of either the first sidewall 35a or the second sidewall 35b. However, in additional embodiments, the area of the first substantially flat sitting surface 60 may be smaller or larger, but is still greater than the area of either sidewall. As shown in FIG. 2, the substantially flat sitting surface 60 has an area that is dimensioned to support two people sitting on the substantially flat sitting surface 60. As one

example, the substantially flat sitting surface 60 has a length of approximately twenty-seven inches, and a width of approximately twelve inches. However, the substantially flat sitting surface 60 may have other dimensions as well.

When the device 5 is configured in a third configuration, such as shown in FIG. 3A, the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b of the second configuration are extended, such as by unfolding layers of the sidewalls, to form a second sitting surface 65. The second sitting surface 65 has an area that is greater than the area of the first substantially flat sitting surface 60 illustrated in FIG. 2. In addition, because the third configuration includes configurations where the tote-bag 5 has been completely unfolded, certain embodiments of the tote-bag will have a second sitting surface 65, which comprises a single layer of material having a first surface and an opposing second surface, as discussed herein. In one specific embodiment, the length of the second sitting surface 65 is approximately sixty-five inches, and the width is approximately forty-eight inches. It is understood that the surface 65 may have other dimensions.

Referring back to FIGs. 1 and 1A, the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b of the device 5 may include a plurality of layers, such as layers 39a, 39b, 39c, and 39d resulting from the folded configuration of the device 5. In addition, each layer 39a, 39b, 39c, and 39d may include one or more additional layers (not shown). In one embodiment, and as illustrated, the combined layers 39a and 39b define sidewall 35a, and comprise a total of seven layers. As will be apparent from the disclosure herein, the number of layers for a sidewall will be dependent on the particular folding pattern used to form the device 5 in the first configuration, among other things. As will be appreciated from the disclosure herein, using a plurality of layers to form sidewalls 35a and 35b provides cushioning to the device 5 when it assumes its second

configuration. The plurality of layers also provide cushioning when the device 5 is used in its first configuration as a seat cushion, as shown in FIG. 1B.

The sidewalls 35a and 35b are folded, as shown in FIG. 1, to form the first configuration of the device 5 having a bottom surface 30 that is integrally formed with the first and second
5 sidewalls. In other words, in the illustrated embodiment, bottom surface 30 includes the folded material of the first and second sidewalls 35A and 35B, respectively after they are folded towards each other. In other embodiments, a separate piece of material may be located adjacent the bottom edges of the first and second sidewalls to form a bottom surface, similar to bottom surface 30, but that is not integrally formed with the sidewalls. For example, a piece of material
10 may be sewn or otherwise attached to sidewalls 35a and 35b to form the bottom surface 30.

Optionally, the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b are constructed of padded material, which may be helpful in providing enhanced comfort to people who use the device 5 as a sitting surface, as discussed herein. In addition, and/or alternatively, the first sidewall and the second sidewall may be constructed of a thermal insulating material, which may be effective to
15 maintain the temperature of certain goods contained in the interior compartment 55. For example, if cold products or other perishables, such as refrigerated goods or frozen items, are being carried in the tote-bag, the thermal insulating material is effective to keep the cold products cold. Similarly, if hot products are being carried in the tote-bag, the thermal insulating material is effective keep the hot products hot. The thermal insulating material may or may not be
20 padded.

Accordingly, the soft body 10 may be constructed with materials such as canvas (nylon or other textile) or other durable material alone or in combination with a flannel, cotton, or other soft material. As described herein, the use of different material types may enhance use of the

multi-purpose device 5 as a tote-bag, seat cushion, and blanket. In one embodiment, the soft body 10 may be constructed with a thermal insulating material positioned and contained between an outer layer of material such as canvas and/or cotton. Thermal insulating material may be of a similar type that is used commonly in known soft cooler/lunch bags. In addition, thermal
5 insulating materials may include pockets of gas, such as air, or pockets of liquids, such as water, which may provide the desired thermal benefits described herein.

The illustrated device 5 also includes a handle 15 attached to sidewall 35b. In the illustrated embodiment, handle 15 includes a first end 15a and a second end 15b. The handle 15 is attached to the sidewall 35b at the first end 15a and at the second end 15b, as shown in FIG. 1.
10 In certain embodiments, such as the embodiment shown in the figures, the device 5 includes a first handle 15, and a second handle 40. The first handle 15 is illustrated as being attached to sidewall 35b, and the second handle 40 is illustrated as being attached to sidewall 35a. Typically, the handles 15 and 40 are constructed of nylon, leather, canvas, or other suitable material. Handles 15 and 40 are preferably constructed of flexible materials, but in certain
15 embodiments, the handles may be constructed of rigid materials, such as plastics and the like. Attachment of the handles to the soft body 10 may be accomplished through various methods including stitching, VELCRO, rivets, buttons or similar suitable techniques.

Typically, when in the first configuration, the first handle 15 and the second handle 40 are attached to either the interior or exterior surfaces of opposite sidewalls 35a and 35b of the
20 soft body 10. Alternatively, the first handle 15 and second handle 40 may be attached such that opposite ends of each handle 15 and 40 are attached to opposite supporting sidewalls 35a and 35b of the soft body 10. In this manner, the handles 15 and 40 would extend across the open top of the interior compartment. In such embodiments, the handles may include a releasing

mechanism associated with the first end or second end of the handles, which facilitate unfolding of the device.

On the other hand, when in the first configuration, a single handle may be used. For example, the first handle 15 may be positioned on the soft body 10 where it is attached to
 5 opposite supporting sides 35A and 35B.

The device 5 may optionally include a pocket, such as pocket 45, located on one or both of the sidewalls. The pocket 45 is effective to permit additional items to be carried with the device in its first configuration without providing noticeable irregularities when the device is positioned in the second or third configurations. Typically, the pocket 45 is constructed of the
 10 same type material that is used to construct the exterior surface of the sidewalls 35A and 35B. Attachment of the pocket 45 to the soft body 10 may be accomplished through various methods including stitching, VELCRO, rivets, buttons or similar suitable techniques.

The device 5 illustrated in FIG. 1 includes a fastener assembly 20 located along the length of the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b. In the illustrated embodiment of the
 15 device 5, a first fastener assembly 20 and a second fastener assembly 50 are provided on opposite edges of the first sidewall 35a and the second sidewall 35b. The fastener assemblies 20 and 50 are spaced apart from each other in a parallel configuration, and each has a first end 20a, 50a and a second end 20b, 50b. The first ends 20a and 50a are located on opposite sides of handle 40, and the second ends 20b and 50b are located on opposite sides of handle 15.

20 In the illustrated embodiment, fastener assemblies 20 and 50 are zippers extending along the length of the sidewalls of the device 5. The zippers may include teeth, as illustrated, or may be smooth, such as zippers for resealable plastic bags that are commonly available, such as with ZIPLOC bags. In additional embodiments not illustrated, the fastener assemblies may include

one or more fastener elements. Examples of fastener elements include, but are not limited to, hook and loop fasteners, such as VELCRO, button and hole fasteners, tie and hole fasteners, tie fasteners, and snap fasteners.

In still additional embodiments, a fastener assembly may be provided along the width
5 35w of the sidewalls 35a and 35b, for example at the opening of the interior compartment 55, thereby providing a closure to the interior compartment 55. Although fastener assemblies 20 and 50 are both illustrated as being the same type of assembly, additional embodiments of the device may have fastener assemblies that are different, for example, one fastener assembly may be a zipper, and one may be a series of VELCRO strips. Other combinations are also included within
10 present invention. When the fastener assemblies include one or more fastener elements, the location of each of the elements is determined such that the arrangement of fastener elements forms a fastener assembly similarly configured to the fastener assemblies 20 and 50 of the illustrated embodiments.

As shown in FIG. 1A, the device 5 may be carried by the handles 15 and 40. The inner
15 compartment 55 is dimensioned to accommodate a plurality of different products, as discussed above.

When the interior compartment 55 is empty, the device in its first configuration may be used as a seat cushion, as shown in FIG. 1B. The handle(s) 15 and/or 40 may be tucked into the interior compartment 55 when the multi-purpose device 5 is used in this manner. Additional
20 benefits may be realized if the first configuration is partially constructed of insulating material, foam, or other padding type material which would provide the user with an additional level of comfort while sitting on the multi-purpose device 5. Typically, the size of the seat cushion, and

hence the size of the device 5 in the first configuration is sufficient to accommodate a single person who sits on the seat cushion.

When the tote-bag is expanded, such as by unfolding the sidewalls 35a and 35b, as discussed herein, the second configuration of the device 5 is obtained, as shown in FIG. 2. As indicated herein, typically, the size of the device 5 in the second configuration when the device 5 is used as a seat cushion is sufficient to accommodate a plurality of people sitting thereon.

When the device 5 is expanded from the second configuration, the third configuration is obtained, as shown in FIG. 3A. The third configuration has a size to accommodate a plurality of people, who may either sit on the device 5 or lay on the device, as shown in FIG. 3B. In the third configuration, the surface with the fastener assemblies 20 and 50, and the handles 15 and 40, such as the first surface 70, will typically be placed toward the ground when sat upon or away from the person's body when used as a blanket such that the second surface 75 is in contact with a person's body.

In the third configuration, a person may lift the device 5 and place his/her arms through one or both of the handles 15 and 40 to hold the soft body 5 more securely to the person's body. In this capacity, the soft body 10 has assumed a fourth configuration where the device may be used or worn as a cape or outer garment for protection from environmental conditions such as rain, wind, or cold.

One example of an expanding or converting sequence of the device 5 from the various configurations is illustrated in FIGs. 4A-4G. FIG. 4A represents the soft body 10 in the first configuration, FIG. 4B represents the soft body 10 in the second configuration, and FIG. 4G represents the soft body 10 in the third configuration. As shown in the continued sequence of FIGs. 4A through 4G, conversion of the soft body from one configuration to another

configuration is typically accomplished by extending or unfolding the soft body 10. As described herein, converting from the first configuration to the second configuration typically requires releasing the first fastener assembly 20 and/or second fastener assembly 50, if used, and expanding the soft body whereby the interior compartment is vitiated.

5 Another expanding sequence is shown in FIG. 6. FIG. 6A illustrates the device 5 in its first configuration. The sidewalls 35a and 35b of the tote-bag are opened, as indicated by the arrows in FIG. 6A to provide the second configuration illustrated in FIG. 6B. From the second configuration of FIG. 6B, flaps 36a and 36b may be opened as indicated by the arrows to obtain the configuration of FIG. 6C. The configuration of FIG. 6C is an intermediate configuration
10 between the second configuration and the final configuration. Even though the configuration of FIG. 6E is typically the "third configuration, the configuration of FIG. 6C may also be viewed as a third configuration, in view of the disclosure herein. The configuration of FIG. 6C has an upper flap 37 which may be opened to obtain the configuration of FIG. 6D. Similar to the configuration of FIG. 6C, the configuration of FIG. 6D is an intermediate configuration between
15 the second configuration and the final configuration, but the configuration of FIG. 6D may also be viewed as a third configuration. From FIG. 6D, flaps 38a and 38b may be opened to obtain the configuration of FIG. 6E, which shows the device 5 with the sitting surface 65 being an upper surface 70. In this third configuration, the device may be used as a blanket or sheet for sitting or laying on the ground, among other things, and as shown in FIG. 3B.

20 Accordingly, in another embodiment of the present invention, the multi-purpose device 5 includes a soft body 10 having a first surface 70 and a generally opposing second surface 75, as shown in FIG. 3A. In view of the disclosure herein, first surface 70 is the same as the second sitting surface 65. The soft body further has a first end edge 80a and a second end edge 80b,

which is spaced apart from the first end edge 80a. The soft body 10 also has a first side edge 85a and a second side edge 85b. The first side edge 85a and the second side edge 85b extend from the first end edge 80a towards the second end edge 80b. In the illustrated embodiment, the soft body 10 is rectangularly shaped, and accordingly, the first side edge 85a and the second side edge 85b extend from the first end edge 80a to the second end edge 80b. In this embodiment, the soft body 10 has an area that is greater than an area of the sidewalls of the device 5 in its first configuration. Although the illustrated embodiment in the third configuration is a rectangle, other embodiments of the invention include other geometric shapes, including but not limited to squares, hexagons, octagons, and other polygons, as well as circles and ovals or ellipses.

The fastener assembly 20 is located on the first surface 70. The fastener assembly has a first end 20a and a second end 20b, as discussed herein. The fastener assembly also includes a central region 20c disposed between the first end 20a and the second end 20b. In the illustrated embodiment, the central region 20c is located substantially along a midline of the soft body 10, such as midline 10m. The device 5 is illustrated as including a handle located in proximity to the first end of the fastener assembly 20. More specifically, the handle 40 is located in proximity to the first ends 20a and 50a of fastener assemblies 20 and 50, respectively, and the handle 15 is located in proximity to the second ends 20b and 50b of fastener assemblies 20 and 50, respectively. By positioning the fastener assemblies 20 and 50 in certain locations of surface 70, a fastener assembly is located on opposing edges of the sidewalls of the tote bag in the first configuration, and the fastener assemblies are located on an outer edge of the soft body in the second configuration, and the fastener assemblies are spaced away from the edges of the soft body in the third configuration. As discussed herein, the soft body 10 has a length and a width, generally defined by first and second side edges 85a or 85b and first and second end edges 80a or

80b, respectively. The fastener assembly 20 is located a distance from the first side edge 85a a distance approximately equal to one-quarter the width of the soft body 10. Similarly, the fastener assembly 50 is located a distance from first side edge 85a a distance approximately equal to one-half of the width of the soft body 10. The fastener assemblies 20 and 50 are oriented in a generally parallel configuration. The fastener assemblies are illustrated as being parallel to each other, as well as being parallel to the first and second side edges 85a and 85b.

Positioning of the fastener assemblies 20 and 50 substantially parallel to each other facilitates retaining of the device 5 in the first configuration as opposite sides 35A and 35B of the soft body 10 are drawn together. In one embodiment which is provided by way of example and not limitation, the first end 20a of the first fastener assembly 20, such as a first zipper, is positioned approximately eleven inches from the first side edge 85a of the soft body 10, and the first end 50a of the second fastener assembly 50, such as a second zipper is positioned approximately eleven inches from the first end 20a of the first fastener assembly 20. In other words, first end 20a is positioned a distance "x" from first side edge 85a, and first end 50a is positioned a distance "y" from the first end 20a. In the illustrated embodiment, "y" is approximately equal to "2x". In addition, in the device illustrated in FIG. 3A, both fastener assemblies 20 and 50 are generally located in a region of the device that has an area that is approximately one-half of the area of the first surface 70. However, additional embodiments may include fastener assemblies in other positional configurations on surface 70.

Alternatively, the multi-purpose device 5 may include a single fastener assembly (not shown) positioned in a substantially H-shape such that the single zipper would similarly retain the device 5 in the first configuration. In this arrangement the single fastener assembly, such as a zipper, would retain the first configuration in a continuous uninterrupted fashion. Once retained,

the interior compartment 55 of the soft body 10 may be used to store and/or carry various items including, as shown in Figure 1A, suntan lotion, an electronic device, and a sun visor, to name just a few, and as discussed herein.

As described herein, the device 5 is converted from one configuration to another
5 configuration by expanding and/or contracting the soft body 10, i.e., folding and/or unfolding. When folding the soft body 10 into the first configuration, portions of the soft body 10 are accumulated and retained to form each of the sidewalls 35A and 35B. The first fastener assembly 20 is positioned on the soft body 10 such that when retaining the device 5 is in the first configuration, approximately equal portions of the soft body 10 are positioned on opposite
10 sidewalls 35A and 35B of the interior compartment. In other words, as best shown in FIG. 2, when the device 5 is in the first configuration, the sidewalls 35A and 35B of the device 5 have soft material accumulated to form substantially symmetrical sidewalls 35A and 35B. Items to be carried or contained may be placed between the folds or layers, such as layers 39A, 39B, 39C, and 39D that form the supporting sides 35A and 35B. Alternatively, items may be placed
15 between the folds of the supporting sides 35A and 35B to separate various items from each other.

As described herein, various materials used in the construction on the soft body 5 may provide different benefits to the user. For example, a flannel or heavy cotton type material on one side of the soft body 10 provides insulation when the soft body 5 is used as a blanket or cape, and protection from rain when water repellent material is used on the other side of the soft
20 body 10. Converting the soft body 5 from the first configuration to the third configuration is typically accomplished by extending or unfolding the soft body 10.

Turning now to Figure 5, a flow chart illustrating a method of using a multi-purpose device in accordance with the present invention is shown. For convenience, the method described herein begins by forming the first configuration. Alternatively, the method described herein may be utilized with the soft body 10 in any physical state by beginning at a step most
5 nearly associated with the current state of the soft body 10. Furthermore, the continuation, or interruption of step(s) once started is entirely dependent upon the soft body's initial configuration and the user's desired final physical configuration of the soft bag 10. Therefore, although the method of the present invention is illustrated herein with steps occurring in a certain order, the specific order of the steps, or any continuation or interruption between steps, is not
10 required.

The process begins at step 500. At step 510, a soft body 10 as described herein is provided. A manufacturer, distributor, or other third party may supply the soft body 10. In this respect, "providing" the multi-purpose device 5 is intended to refer to the fact that such a device
5 is in fact present for use with the method, and so the device 5 may also be provided by the
15 actual user thereof.

At step 520, a method of transforming a multi-purpose device begins by forming the first configuration suitable for use as a tote-bag. Formation of the first, second, and third configuration is best illustrated in FIGS. 4A-4G and FIGS. 6A-6E. Thus, the term "forming" typically corresponds to an expanding/contracted or a folding/unfolding of the soft body 10. As
20 described herein, in the first configuration the soft body 10 is arranged, i.e., folded, to have a bottom and sidewalls which together define outer walls and an interior compartment. The interior compartment has inner surfaces and an open top. The fastener assemblies 20 and/or 50, typically a zipper(s), are used to retain the device in the first configuration such that

approximately equal portions of the soft body 10 are on opposite sides of the interior compartment.

At step 530, a second configuration suitable for use as a seat cushion is formed. The second configuration, as shown in FIG. 4B, is typically formed by releasing the fastener assembly (zipper, snaps, buttons, etc.) and drawing the supporting sides away from each other such that the interior compartment is vitiated.

At step 540, a third configuration suitable for use a blanket is formed. As described herein and shown in FIG. 4G, the third configuration is preferably formed by fully expanding the soft body 10 to form a substantially flat surface. Alternatively, as shown in each of the FIGs. 4C through 4F, the soft body 10 may be considered to be in a substantially flat arrangement. Therefore, in each of the FIGs. 4C through 4F, the soft body 10 may also be utilized as a blanket albeit a smaller blanket than that represent by the third configuration of FIG. 4G. Optionally, the method may include an additional step of receiving a person's arms so that the device may be used as a cape.

As previously described herein, the specific order of the steps is not required. For example, when the multi-purpose device 5 is in the second configuration (step 530), the user may prefer to form the first configuration (step 520) instead of forming the third configuration (step 540).

While certain embodiments are illustrated in the drawings and are described herein, including preferred embodiments, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that the specific embodiments described herein may be modified without departing from the inventive concepts described. Accordingly, Applicant's invention as described herein is not to be restricted, except in accordance with the law by the claims which follow.